

REMARKS

Claims 1-67 are pending and have been examined in the present application. Claims 1-15, 17-29, 35-50, 52-64, 66 and 67 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over Mora et al. (U.S. patent No. 6,161,113). Claims 16, 30-34, 51 and 65 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Mora in view of Webber Jr., (U.S. patent No. 6,167,378). In light of the above amendments and below remarks reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

In paragraph 2 of the Office Action it is noted that there was a typographical error in the application as filed, in that there were two claims numbered 57. The Examiner has graciously renumbered claims 58-66 as 59-67 respectively. Applicants gratefully acknowledge this renumbering by the Examiner. As seen in the attached amendment to the claims, this typographical error has been corrected. Withdrawal of the objection to the claims is therefore respectfully requested.

In paragraph 4 of the Office Action claims 1-15, 17-29, 35-50, 52-64, 66 and 67 have been rejected under § 102 over Mora et al. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Each of independent claims 1, 35 and 36 require “automatically forwarding a notice requesting approval of the at least one electronic document to a successive one of the entities of the approval hierarchy upon approval of at least one electronic document by a previous entity in the approval hierarchy.”

In rejecting this limitation of all the independent claims, the Office Action points to the recitation in claim 6 of the Mora patent which recites “programming for a display that prompts a user to enter a request for signatures for a document

and that generates a signature request document in response to said request for approval.” Applicants respectfully disagree that this claim of Mora anticipates or even suggests the express limitations of the independent claims as described above.

Specifically, claim 6 of Mora does not teach “automatically forwarding” the notice to anyone. This claim merely states that a signature request document is generated. The generation of signature request documents is old in the art and is not what is recited in the independent claims of the present application. Each of the independent claims further requires that the notice is automatically forwarded to “a successive one of the entities in the approval hierarchy.” Mora does not teach an approval hierarchy whatsoever. In rejecting a previous limitation of the independent claims, the Office Action points to Mora at col. 10, col. 12 and col. 13 as disclosing an approval hierarchy. Applicants respectfully disagree. At these portions of Mora, it is merely disclosed that a form is generated for approval by senior management. It does not disclose an approval hierarchy. The Office Action states that Mora discloses four levels of approval. Again, Applicants respectfully disagree. The approvals disclosed in these sections of Mora relate to four different phases of a project, and do not disclose a hierarchal approval process for a single document as is expressly recited in each of the independent claims.

Finally, each of the independent claims requires that the notice is automatically forwarded “upon approval of the at least one electronic document by a previous entity in the approval hierarchy.” Claim 6 of Mora does not teach or even suggest this automatic forwarding of the notice once a previous entity in the hierarchy has approved the electronic document.

As Mora does not teach or even suggest any of the three limitations recited in each of the independent claims as discussed above, withdrawal of the rejection of all of the claims on the basis of Mora is therefore respectfully requested.

In paragraph 19 of the Office Action claims 16, 30-34, 51 and 65 have been rejected under § 103 over Mora in view of Webber Jr. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Each of these rejected claims is dependent upon one of the independent claims discussed above. Webber has been cited in order to reject additional limitations found in these dependent claims. Webber does not cure the fundamental deficiency of Mora as described above. As each of these dependent claims includes the expressed limitations of their independent claims, Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of Mora and Webber does not render these claims unpatentable under § 103 for the reasons discussed above with respect to the independent claims. Withdrawal of the rejection of claims 16, 30-34, 51 and 65 is therefore respectfully requested.

Applicants have shown that Mora does not teach or suggest at least three of the limitations of each of the independent claims. Applicants have furthermore shown that the supplement reference, Webber, does not cure the deficiencies of Mora. Withdrawal of all of the rejections of the claims of the present application on the basis of Mora is therefore respectfully requested. As each of the claims in the present application are currently in condition for allowance such action is earnestly solicited.

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Respectfully submitted,

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